

**Summary of the
Proficiency Testing Committee Teleconference
April 7, 1998**

The Proficiency Testing Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Tuesday, April 7, 1998, at 1 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Anne Rhyne of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to summarize the Dallas meeting and discuss tasks to be completed in preparation of the NELAC IV Annual Meeting.*

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Robert (Bob) Graves from U.S. EPA Office of Research and Development, Mr. Steve Clark, U.S. EPA Office of Solid Waste, and Ms. Reenie Parris from NIST, Analytical Chemistry Division were invited participants in the teleconference.

SUMMARY OF DALLAS MEETING

Ms. Rhyne began by thanking those who attended the Dallas meeting. She remarked that they were able to move quickly through the agenda and that the meeting was very productive. Topics of discussion were the Proficiency Testing Oversight Body, the accreditation process, frequency and schedule of proficiency tests, and clarification of language for supplemental studies. Revisions were hand-written on a double-spaced version of the Chapter 2 document.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Ms. Rhyne noted that there were other comments by submitted by Mr. David Friedman yet unseen by the committee. The committee's deadline for receipt of comments is past. She called Ms. Jeanne Mourrain and Ms. Jan Jablonski to find out if these were EMMC comments. Ms. Mourrain told her to wait to hear from her (in a day or two) before moving forward with the comments. Once Ms. Rhyne is told that the comments are final, she will distribute them to the committee. If more changes are required to Chapter 2 due to these comments, it will be necessary for the committee to discuss and vote on changes during a conference call. A committee member remarked that the Quality Systems Committee is facing the same issue. The deadline for submission of a revised chapter and appendices is April 15th. A revised draft needs to be submitted to RTI for finalization and submission to Ms. Mourrain to meet this deadline.

REVISIONS TO SECTION B.1.2

Mr. Chuck Wibby updated the committee on the status of Section B.1.2. He is waiting for information to allow him to determine whether the provider limits would be at 1, 1½, or 2 standard deviations. He intimated that one standard deviation should be adequate to allow providers to meet quality requirements. It gives limits that look very good from the providers end and for the PTOB. Mr. Wibby stated that there appear to be anomalies in the regression data contained in the EPA's National Standards. Mr. Graves requested a list of these anomalies. Mr.

Wibby will get regression/standard deviation numbers (i.e., provider limits) to Ms. Rhyne before April 15, 1998.

EPA'S NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR WATER PROFICIENCY TESTING STUDIES

Tables 1-1, 1-2, 2-1, and 2-2 of EPA's National Standards contain, for the water supply (WS) and the water pollution (WP) studies, a list of the analytes of concern for evaluation of laboratory performance, the concentration ranges of acceptable samples, and the procedures to be used to calculate the acceptance limits for each analyte. It was questioned where in Chapter 2 of the NELAC standards to incorporate a reference to Tables 1-1, 1-2, 2-1, and 2-2. Ms. Rhyne suggested that the answer is to reference the tables within the scope of Appendices A and B, and any other section that applies. Mr. Graves prefers that the entire National Standard be accepted.

Ms. Rhyne asked the committee for other comments or suggestions they had related to EPA's National Standards. She also asked the committee what differences exist between Chapter 2 and the National Standards.

Mr. Tom Coyner had comments related to Section C.1.1.2. First he noted that the committee accepted the regression data from the National Standards. He said that some of the information is confidential (e.g., ranges) and we do not want to provide this in the standards. He said that it may be more appropriate for providers to get information from NELAC once they are indeed providers.

Another suggestion for Chapter 2, was to adopt and reference only the regression equations from EPA's document. It was pointed out that for June, the only thing the PT Committee has actually included are the tables. The data specifications will be the PTOB's responsibility and are out of the scope of Chapter 2. It is currently assumed that the PTOB and EPA's Office of Water will be consistent in their specifications. NIST will need additional information to monitor providers.

With regard to the NELAP database of accrediting authorities, the main point is that the PTOB will be maintaining the database for oversight, even though the database "belongs" to EPA.

Other concerns expressed included the development and use of warning limits, clear and precise language regarding the PTOB rating providers, and completeness of lists of analytes, concentrations, and limits.

MICROBIOLOGY (APPENDIX E)

There was some discussion on acceptance limits. Mr. Steve Clark said that the Office of Drinking Water has no requirement for laboratories to perform PT samples. This is done for EPA Regional and State laboratories only. Other testing is done through the States. He said that EPA's current standard is 6 correct analyses out of 6 samples. New England's standard is to allow only one false positive out of 10 samples. However, there are no regulations which bind the States to either of the standards.

It was pointed out that either a false negative or a false positive result can have a bad impact. A false negative could potentially impact public health. A false positive result would require additional sampling which could be costly and could cause the public to ignore future warnings (“crying wolf”).

Ms. Rhyne stated that balance is needed between what is technically justifiable and what people are currently using. The PT Committee is recommending Appendix E which requires 9 out of 10 samples to be analyzed correctly, and fails the laboratory for either a false positive or false negative.

Mr. Clark stated that he is uncomfortable presenting something that no one is using. The committee responded that although the standard presented in Appendix E is not currently being used, it is a composite that will hopefully satisfy all.

The committee intends to hold a teleconference with Mr. Clark and EPA’s Water Supply Committee to discuss these issues. This meeting is scheduled for May 5, 1998, and Mr. Matt Caruso will serve as the lead.

The agenda will consist of the following items:

- Mr. Caruso will explain the rationale used to develop Appendix E
- Mr. Clark will explain the other two methods (EPA and New England)
- the committees will come up with a consensus to present at NELAC IV.

In addition, the PT Committee intends to hold a meeting with stakeholders before the main PT meeting at NELAC IV.

MEETING WITH EPA AND NIST

It was asked whether or not another meeting was needed between the PT Committee, EPA, and NIST. One person stated that the PT Committee needs to know what specifically NIST can and cannot do.

Ms. Parris said that the NIST schedule currently entails working on comments they have received and acceptability requirements. She also said that NIST would like to include NELAC’s requirements in their second revision of Handbook 150-XX. NIST has been reviewing different lists and has added some compounds already. Ms. Parris said that a consensus list of prioritized compounds was needed from the PT Committee. She asked that the committee come up with one list of compounds which are critical for reciprocity. This is especially important if the compounds will be added to listing classes.

The PT Committee agreed to send Ms. Parris within the next few days, a letter originally drafted during the Dallas meeting which contains a list of NELAC’s requirements. The committee plans to have a meeting with NIST and EPA in mid to late May.

RESPONSE LETTER

A member of the committee asked whether or not the committee would be sending out letters to thank those who submitted comments on Chapter 2 and its appendices. Mr. Wibby had already drafted a letter which could be used. Ms. Rhyne intimated that as numbers increased, it would be difficult for the committee to do this each time. However, since there were only four commentators this time, she agreed that it was a good idea.

ACTION ITEMS
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Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Mr. Friedman's comments to be distributed after approval.	
2.	Mr. Wibby will provide data relevant to Section B.1.2 to Ms. Rhyne.	4/15/98
3.	EPA's National Standards will be referenced in Chapter 2 and its appendices where they apply.	

PARTICIPANTS
Proficiency Testing Committee Teleconference
April 7, 1998

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